



## eastern hognose snake

*Heterodon platirhinos*

|                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Kingdom:         | Animalia               |
| Division/Phylum: | Chordata - vertebrates |
| Class:           | Reptilia               |
| Order:           | Squamata               |
| Family:          | Colubridae             |

### Features

The eastern hognose snake typically ranges from 20 to 33 inches long. Its snout is upturned with a ridge on the top. This snake may be yellow, brown, gray, olive, orange, or red. The back usually has dark blotches, but may be plain. A pair of large dark blotches is found behind the head. The underside of the tail is lighter than the belly. The scales are keeled (ridged). Its head shape is adapted for burrowing after hidden toads and it has elongated teeth used to puncture inflated toads so it can swallow them.

### Natural History

The eastern hognose lives in areas with sandy or loose soil such as floodplains, old fields, woods, and hillsides. This snake eats toads and frogs. It is active in the day. It may overwinter in an abandoned small mammal burrow. It will flatten its head and neck, hiss, and inflate its body with air when disturbed, hence its nickname of "puff adder." It also may vomit, flip over on its back, shudder a few times, and play dead. The

hognose snake will excrete large amounts of foul-smelling waste material if picked up. Mating season occurs in April and May. The female deposits 15 to 25 eggs under rocks or in loose soil from late May to July. Hatching occurs in August or September.

### Habitats

bottomland forests; interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River

### Iowa Status

common; native

### Iowa Range

southern two-thirds of Iowa

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.